

ILLINOIS ENGLISH BULLETIN

Official Publication of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English

Vol. 45, No. 4

Urbana, Illinois

January, 1958

Published every month except June, July, August, and September. Subscription price, \$2.00 per year; single copies, 25 cents. *Entered as second-class matter October 29, 1941, at the post office at Urbana, Illinois, under the act of March 3, 1879.* Address all business communications to Harris Wilson, 109 English Building, Urbana, Illinois. Address manuscripts and other editorial communications to J. N. Hook, Editor, 203 English Building, Urbana, Illinois, or to Wilmer Lamar, Co-Editor, Decatur Senior High School, Decatur, Illinois.

A Survey of Teachers of High School Creative Writing

MAR 22 1961
by JAMES E. NOAH

Although professional journals feature many articles concerning methods for teaching creative writing which have been found to be successful in the authors' classes, few, if any, articles present a reservoir of information drawn from many teachers of creative writing. This article is a report of the results of a survey which was designed to gather the methods and materials employed in class instruction by many teachers.

To avoid surveying all teachers of English on the chance that they all teach some aspects of creative writing, the author turned to the *Illinois English Bulletin* for a listing of teachers who definitely promote creative efforts in their classes. The *Bulletin's* annual publications of "Some of the Best Illinois High School Prose" and "Some of the Best Illinois High School Poetry" offer a list of the high school authors as well as their teachers. The twelve issues of high school prose and poetry for 1950-1955 were selected for the purposes of surveying because of the relative uniformity of the criteria for selection of the student pieces.

The 428 pieces published in this six-year period represent the efforts of the high school students of 140 teachers. Within each of the high school issues is an Honorable Mention list of works of students; however, the teachers of these students were not sur-

How do successful teachers of creative writing attain the results that they do? Mr. Noah, of Illinois State Normal University, answers that question after studying the strategy and tactics of 78 successful Illinois teachers.

veyed, although 105 of the 140 teachers surveyed had works of their students in the Honorable Mention ratings.

Seventy-eight teachers of the 140 surveyed returned the survey form. These 78 replies constitute 55.7 per cent of returns for the total distributed. Not all of the returned survey forms were complete with all of the questions answered.

The thirty-seven questions of the survey form sent to the 140 teachers are divided roughly into three sections: (1) the status of creative writing as a course and general practices in teaching creative writing; (2) specific approaches and methods; and (3) the training, experience, and teaching load of the teachers.

Section I: Status of Creative Writing And General Teaching Practices

The simple marking part of the first question was answered on all seventy-eight returns.

Do you teach creative writing in connection with a regular

English composition or grammar course? 24

A literature course? 14

A journalism course? 9

A separate course of creative writing? 6

A combination literature-composition course? 25

The combination literature-composition course received the greatest number of checks for a total of 32 per cent. The standard composition or grammar course is next with 31 per cent. The most infrequently ranked course is the separate course of creative writing which was checked on 8 per cent of the returns.

The discussion answers to the second part of the first question cover the ways in which creative writing may be taught within a course.

If creative writing is taught as an integral part of a composition, literature, or journalism course, how do you make it a part of the course?

Seven teachers discuss their practices in including creative writing within the composition course. Two of these teachers have found that creative writing grows directly from a study of the four basic forms of writing. One teacher strives for an understanding of the fundamentals of good creative expression. After this understanding is attained by her students, she provides for writing experience with a weekly theme for the remainder of the course. Another teacher uses supplementary materials to introduce essay and poetry writing. A study of a book of essays leads students into

attempts to capture the essay style. Recordings of poetry distributed by the National Council of Teachers of English and the rules for entry in the National High School Poetry Association contest stimulate students in their poetic efforts. In keeping a "creative atmosphere" in the classroom, one teacher sets aside a "special creative writing day" for her classes. To inject "fun" into writing, another teacher has her students compose descriptions of members of the class, read them to the class, and see how quickly they can guess the identities of the described students.

In reply to the question of including creative writing in the literature class, one teacher labels creative writing a "natural outgrowth" of a study of literature. All of the eleven teachers who answered this question say that literature is studied for the styles of writing, for literary forms of the essay, sonnet, and short story, and for models the students may follow in their own efforts at writing.

Within a journalism course, creative efforts flow from the feature type of story, editorials, and interviews. The three journalism teachers who described the place of creative writing in journalism courses make "creative writing" synonymous with "feature writing."

The combination literature-composition course offers two opportunities for introducing creative writing into the course: the study of literary forms and styles, and a coordinated study of grammatical principles applied to writing. One teacher uses grammar to initiate creative efforts with a study of adjectives or "pictures" which grow from single words "to sentences to paragraphs to compositions."

In reporting the role of creative writing within a course, one teacher sees a weakness in holding creative expression as incidental to the study of composition or literature. She claims that giving primary attention to the study of literature cannot produce "the gradual growth in perception and skill that should be reached in a class concentrating on writing."

In the answers to Question 2, the teachers show a preference for the unit method.

Do you teach by the unit method? Yes 42 No 36.

Have you a unit for illustration?

What other method(s) do you use?

Fifty-four per cent of the teachers favor the unit method. The third part of the question was answered on eleven returns and all of the eleven described units rather than different methods. The

units come from various sources. One teacher follows unit developments suggested by a textbook. Six teachers use a study of literary forms as a basis for units. In journalism courses the units are based on the types of journalistic writing—feature writing, editorials, column writing, interviews, and straight news stories. In order to develop composition skills which carry over into creative writing, one teacher uses a unit on paragraph development by “detail, contrast, comparison, repetition, cause and effect, and incident.”

The teachers indicate in their answers to Question 3 that vocabulary study is closely correlated with writing.

Are word studies used in conjunction with the writing?

Yes 53 No 25. How used?

Word studies are mentioned by 68 per cent of the teachers. In answering the second part of the question, eight teachers indicate that they follow textbooks for the improvement of vocabulary. The other nineteen teachers who reported on this question have their students compile and study lists of words which are effective in fitting the situation of the writing to the desired effect the writer expects. These lists of words are compiled in three ways: (1) the students list words they find effective, (2) the teacher presents a list for study, or (3) the students and the teacher locate effective words in literature and use these for study.

In reply to Question 4, the teachers indicate a preference for weekly assignments of writing.

How frequently do you assign compositions?

Daily 5 Weekly 46 Other 27

Fifty-nine per cent of the teachers assign weekly writings, whereas only 6 per cent give assignments daily. “Other” frequencies of assignment vary from every two weeks to monthly writings. Two teachers state that the frequency of assignments is dependent upon the pressures on the students and the teacher.

Of the 78 replies to Question 5, 58 per cent assign lengths to pieces frequently, but none of the teachers always assign lengths to writings.

Do you assign definite lengths to pieces?

Always 0 Frequently 45 Never 33.

In what cases do you assign length?

Length is most frequently assigned to certain types of writing with a minimum of pages or words. The types of writing which received assignments by lengths are the term paper, which three teachers give a minimum length of 1,500, 2,500, and 4,000 words; essays,

which six teachers assign word length of 300 to 500 words; and poetic forms which are specific in length, such as a sonnet. Seven teachers listed lengths for "compositions" or "short exercises" of from 150 to 300 words or from one page to two pages in length. Two other teachers decide length by the "completeness" of the writing.

A suggested list of topics for student use is presented by 83 per cent of the teachers, but only 9 per cent of these teachers restrict their students to this list.

Do you present a list of topics for student use?

Yes 65 No 13. Do you restrict students entirely to this list? Yes 7 No 71.

Where did you get this list of topics? A text?

Elsewhere?

The teachers indicated eleven different sources for the lists they use for topics.

TABLE 1

THE SOURCES OF LISTS OF TOPICS AND THE FREQUENCY OF USE

<i>Sources of Topics</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
Personal list.....	31
Textbooks.....	16
<i>Illinois English Bulletin</i>	13
Students.....	13
Current events.....	3
College notes.....	2
School activities.....	2
University of Illinois Freshman Rhetoric Placement Test.....	2
National Council of Teachers of English.....	1
Current magazines.....	1
School newspaper exchanges.....	1

Twenty-two per cent of the teachers reporting on Question 7 indicate that they use a favorite topic of their own creation for the writing of their students.

Do you use a favorite topic of your own?

Yes 17 No 61.

What is it? Why do you use this?

Nine of the teachers who use a favorite topic of their own answered the discussion part of the question with the observation that these favorite topics are topics "that everyone can write on." Three of these teachers have "My Pet Peeve" as their favorite topic in order to get an "emotional response" from their students. Some of the other topics are "Observation of an Animal," "Dating," "If I Had Three Wishes," "People I Know," and "Autumn Tints." One teacher has her students read a newspaper story and then write what they believe or imagine to be the background of the event.

The teachers rarely impose topics upon their students, as Question 8 reveals.

Do you [ever] permit your students complete freedom in selection of topics? Yes 66 No 12.

If "Yes," Always 19 Frequently 35 Occasionally 12.

At what times do you allow complete freedom of choice?

Of the 85 per cent of the teachers who ever allow complete freedom of choice in the selection of topics, 29 per cent grant this freedom at all times. Frequent freedom of choice is given by 53 per cent of the teachers reporting.

The teachers show in answering the discussion part of the question that they most often grant this freedom during the writing of poetry and essays. Five teachers permit their students to select topics when they have demonstrated a "confidence in their ability to write," which one teacher describes as an "independence in thought." Three teachers permit this choice only to the best student writers. Two other teachers report that their classes "request the privilege."

The teachers have found few textbooks which are effective for the teaching of creative writing, according to their answers to Question 9.

Do you use a textbook for creative writing?

Yes 7 No 71. What is the text?

A total of 91 per cent reveal that no textbook for creative writing is in use in their classrooms. Five of the seven teachers who do use a textbook named their texts; however, three of the five books were journalism texts. One teacher, who does not use a printed textbook, commented that the textbook for creative writing is "life—real situations, real people, and nature."

Section II: Specific Approaches And Methods *

Ninety-five per cent of the teachers reporting on Question 1 employ literature as an approach to creative writing.

Use literature as an approach? Yes 74 No 4.

In what manner?

The thirty-seven teachers who answered the discussion part of the question indicated four major reasons for using literature.

(1) Twenty teachers use literature to study the styles of vari-

*All of the nineteen questions in this section begin with "Do You, in Teaching."

- ous authors. The styles of authors serve for models or for direct imitation. The students of these teachers read works of literature, study the styles of the authors, and follow the examples of these authors.
- (2) Eleven teachers use literature to give students a wide range of ideas to explore. An examination of these ideas, an understanding of human motives, and a study of possible variations to the plots offer the students opportunities to expand the number and quality of their own ideas.
 - (3) Four teachers use literature to prepare character sketches from the figures found in literature.
 - (4) Two teachers use literature for a study of literary types. The students of these teachers study the literary types as a basis for writing those types, i.e., poetic types are studied before the students write poetry.

Although the use of literature as an approach to creative writing is practically unanimous, only a bare majority of the teachers employ literature as a study of techniques of authors.

Conduct studies of techniques of authors?

Yes 42 No 36. Which authors? In what manner?

Twenty-three of the forty-two teachers who conduct studies of the techniques of authors listed the various authors they use. According to one teacher, the list of authors should include all the "literary greats." (See Table 2 on page 8.)

In discussing the manner in which they use these authors, the teachers reported that they pay detailed attention to the authors' techniques, such as symbolism, character development, use of dialogue, characterization, variety in beginnings, figures of speech, repetition, and sentence structure.

Fewer teachers have their students pattern their writing after the styles and techniques of various authors than have them study the techniques of authors.

Have your students pattern their writing after the techniques and styles of various authors?

Yes 30 No 48. In what manner? Examples.

Sixty-two per cent of the teachers avoid the practice of having their students pattern after or imitate the styles of established authors. In discussing the manner of the patterning and in citing examples of authors suitable for patterning exercises, twelve teachers changed the word "pattern" to "imitate." Nine of these twelve listed the authors and works which they use as patterns for imitation. Some of the authors and works are Francis Bacon's

essays, Joseph Addison's "gentle satire," Amy Lowell's *Lilacs*, Washington Irving's *Rip Van Winkle*, Joyce Kilmer's *Trees*,

TABLE 2
THE AUTHORS STUDIED FOR TECHNIQUES AND THEIR
FREQUENCY OF CITATION

Author	Frequency	Author	Frequency
Joseph Addison	2	Charles Lamb	2
Maxwell Anderson	1	Edward Lear	1
Matthew Arnold	1	Jack London	2
Francis Bacon	3	Amy Lowell	1
Stephen Vincent Benét	1	John Masefield	1
Willa Cather	1	Edgar Lee Masters	1
Geoffrey Chaucer	1	Edna St. Vincent Millay	3
James Fenimore Cooper	1	John Milton	3
Maureen Daly	2	Alfred Noyes	1
Clarence Day	1	O. Henry	1
Charles Dickens	3	Edgar Allan Poe	5
Emily Dickinson	4	Ernie Pyle	1
John Dos Passos	1	Edward Arlington Robinson	1
Arthur Conan Doyle	1	Carl Sandburg	5
George Eliot	1	Walter Scott	1
T. S. Eliot	1	William Shakespeare	3
Ralph Waldo Emerson	3	Richard Steele	1
William Faulkner	1	John Steinbeck	2
Robert Frost	6	Jonathan Swift	1
Nathaniel Hawthorne	1	Sarah Teasdale	1
Ernest Hemingway	3	Leo Tolstoy	1
Homer	1	Edith Wharton	1
Aldous Huxley	1	Walt Whitman	2
Washington Irving	1	Thomas Wolfe	1
John Keats	2	Philip Wylie	1

Edgar Allan Poe's *Tell-Tale Heart*, and Alfred Noyes' *The Highwayman*. One teacher commented that many students imitate various authors unconsciously. Another teacher added the note that style is "personality" or a "personal matter" and therefore, patterning should never be allowed.

Although 38 per cent of the teachers have their students imitate techniques of authors, only 27 per cent of the teachers indicate that they encourage a conscious imitation of technique, which is the approach set forth in Question 4.

Encourage your students to imitate consciously these techniques? Yes 21 No 57.

The twenty-one teachers who answered "yes" to Question 4, marked Question 5 similarly to indicate that they do attempt to control these imitations.

Attempt to control this patterning? Yes 21 No 57.

In what manner?

The devices for control over this patterning vary with the teachers. One teacher has her students compare their efforts with the author's they have imitated, and she then points out the students' originality. Another teacher attempts to control patterning by forcing her students to write on their own experiences. "In getting them across, they have little time to be preoccupied with anyone else's style." One teacher does not permit the student to extend the patterning into an imitation of thought: "The work must always be the student's own thinking and expression; he must not become servile."

Unanimously, the teachers approve the approach in Question 6.

Have your students draw topics from familiar, personal events and interests? Yes 78 No 0. In what manner?

Fourteen teachers discussed the manner of keeping their students writing on familiar topics. One teacher insists that "what is written be 'true'—if not the actual truth." Three teachers use discussion of topics prior to the writing, and they find that this discussion tends to make students draw upon comparable personal experiences in writing about the topic. Nine other teachers listed topics which limit their students to familiar subjects only—home, family, friends, pets, sense impressions, school events, hopes for the future, and field trips. One teacher, however, cautions her students to write what the other students would enjoy reading.

The teachers were nearly unanimous in their approval of the direct and simple style of writing for the works of their students.

Attempt to keep your students writing in a simple and direct manner from events in their familiar surroundings and to avoid "fine" or "adjective" writing about unfamiliar subjects? Yes 73 No 5. How is this done?

The five who answered Question 7 negatively assert that they "restrict nothing" in the creative efforts of their students. Twenty-seven teachers discussed their methods for avoiding the "fine" writing of their students. Fourteen teachers read examples of effective simplicity in writing or examples of the "adjective" writing which is to be avoided. "Honest, sincere, and critical appraisal" keeps the students of seven teachers writing simply about familiar events. Three other teachers use individual theme conferences to explain the faults of "adjective" writing. Two teachers advise their students to employ "strong verbs" to carry the weight of the story and not to give this duty to adjectives.

Most of the teachers show a preference for the use of sense impressions to limit their students to writing about familiar events.

Strive for sense impressions? Yes 66 No 12.

In what manner?

Eighty-five per cent of the teachers seek to have students write about sense impressions. Twenty-eight of these teachers answered the discussion part of Question 8. Twelve of these make use of literature to point out effective sense imagery. Some of the authors whose works are found to be rich in sense imagery are Thomas Wolfe, Jack London, John Steinbeck, John Keats in *The Eve of St. Agnes*, Philip Wylie in *Velvet*, and Rupert Brooke in *The Great Lover*. Eight other teachers have their students compile lists of words which appeal to a certain sense.

Four other methods of striving for sense impressions were reported. Three teachers give "looking and listening" assignments in which the students observe, take notes, and write about their observations. Another three teachers strive to arouse in their students an awareness of the surroundings, or as one of these teachers says, "Wake them up!" One teacher tries to get her students to create the feelings of "bleakness, cold, heat, or the Christmas spirit." The students of another teacher view films and then record their impressions.

Student journals and logs do not receive much attention in the classes of the teachers reporting on Question 9.

Have your students keep a journal or log? Yes 22 No 56.

How is this used for actual writing?

One-half of the teachers who employ this approach answered the discussion portion. Eight of these eleven teachers have their students record conversations, sense impressions, and observations with the design that these notations will serve as topics in future writings. One teacher uses the journal for practice in different methods of development. A study of literature introduces the writing of journals in the classes of two teachers. One of these conducts a study of journals of famous authors; and, following a study of Colonial literature, the other teacher has her students keep a journal as though they were Puritan children in early Colonial days.

A total of 56 per cent of the teachers employ the autobiography as a "personal introduction."

Have your students write autobiographies?

Yes 44 No 34. Approach?

Eight teachers say in the discussion part that they use the autobiography as the first writing in the course. These teachers keep the autobiographies to guide them in their work with the students during the school year. The students of two teachers write their autobiographies after they have studied a unit of autobiographies. One teacher has juniors write autobiographies when they do a unit on vocations. In her senior class another teacher uses the autobiography as preparation for the students' writing for college application.

Question 11 is a simple marking question without provision for discussion.

Have your students write a prediction for a person or society? Yes 10 No 68.

Coordination of topics with school, local, national, and world events varies with the geographic nearness of the events to the students, according to the teachers who marked Question 12.

Coordinate topics with school events? Yes 51 No 23.

Local events? Yes 41 No 33.

National events? Yes 37 No 37.

World events? Yes 34 No 40.

From the 69 per cent who coordinate topics with school events, the percentage lowers to 55 per cent for local events, 50 per cent for national events, and 46 per cent for world events.

Holidays and seasons serve as "natural springboards" for writing for 70 per cent of the teachers who answered Question 13.

Coordinate topics with seasons or holidays?

Yes 52 No 22. In what manner?

Twenty-two teachers listed the holidays and seasons which they coordinate as topics. Sixteen of the teachers cited Christmas as the holiday especially suitable as a topic. Other topics are February birthdays, Easter, spring, winter, Thanksgiving, end of the semester, prom time, and Valentine's Day.

A majority of the teachers avoid historical heroes and heroines as topics for writing by students.

Use historical heroes and heroines as topics?

Yes 24 No 51. In what manner?

One-third of the teachers reporting find the characters in history suitable as topics for writing. The ten teachers who wrote on the discussion question use the study of a period in history as a background for the writing of imagined conversations, imagined interviews with the men and women in history, and illustration of principles underlying historical events.

The replies to Question 15 show that teachers do not use history extensively for topics.

Employ local, state, or national history for topics?
Yes 30 No 44. --In what manner?

Six of the thirteen who discussed the manner of employing history for topics indicated that essay contests provide the incentive to write upon historical topics. Some of the organizations which sponsor contests are the Daughters of the American Revolution, the American Legion, the Elks, the American Legion Auxiliary, and county historical societies. Histories of local communities are the basis for writings in the classes of two teachers. One has her class writing a centennial history of the town. The other teacher had her class interview noted people of the community, and these interviews led to a class group-writing project of the history of the community. To develop historical perspective in students, one teacher employs several topics, such as "Great Discoveries, Successful Pioneers, and The Beginnings of National Parks."

Slightly more than one-third of the teachers employ group work on writing projects.

Employ group work for topics? Yes 27 No 48.
What topics are suitable for group work?

In the discussion portion, one teacher reports the use of the topic "Why Do Teen Agers Act As They Do?" for group work. Another teacher has her class do group "takeoffs" on the style of *Time* and the *Bible*, and on slang usage. A banquet program with each of the students giving an after-dinner speech is a group method for one teacher. In another teacher's class, literature is rewritten in the style of the television program "You Are There." Two teachers have group analysis and criticism of the students' writing. Three teachers report that their room facilities will not permit group work.

Sixty-three per cent of the teachers use a topic sentence which their students develop as a method in their teaching.

Have your students complete* a topic sentence which you give? Yes 47 No 28. Examples.

Sixteen teachers returned examples of topic sentences which they have found to be effective. These topic sentences are:

I have increased my vocabulary by

She was a picture of misery (or joy).

I was afraid.

As I look into the future, the steps of my life become clear.

*The choice of the word "complete" in the question was unfortunate.

The spy slithered stealthily toward the dugout.
 The plane took off from the carrier.
 What this school (city, country) needs most is
 I disapprove.
 When I am down town, I notice much evidence that Christmas is
 near.
 One glance at her room would tell me why she is called "Careless
 Susie."
 The happiest day of my life was
 If I were Tab Hunter I'd
 Elvis Presley is
 Teenagers should be careful drivers.
 Eighteen-year-olds should be allowed to vote.
 I'm just an old shoe.
 Although I'm a penny, I've had many experiences.
 It was a perfect day. Bright sun . . . crisp, cool breezes making
 the whitecap waves play tag along the shore. I shook my beach
 robe to the sand and prepared to dive into the cool waves. Then
 suddenly

Expanding upon the thought of a quotation is a method of 54
 per cent of the teachers who answered Question 18.

Present a quotation ("Money is the root of all evil") and have the
 students expand upon the thought? Yes 41 No 35. Examples.

Eighteen teachers reported the quotations which they use for ex-
 pansion of thought by their students. The quotations are:

Our echoes roll from soul to soul.
 A little learning is a dangerous thing.
 All that glitters is not gold.
 Knowledge is power.
 Actions speak louder than words.
 Nothing can be truly great which is not right.
 Strike while the iron is hot.
 A stone let go cannot be recalled.
 I came, I saw, I conquered.
 A soft answer turneth away wrath.
 Bread cast upon the waters will come back cake.
 So much a long communion tends to make us what we are.
 Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow.
 When I was a child I spake as a child.
 He prayeth best who loveth best all creatures [*sic*] great and small.
 If at first you don't succeed, try again.
 A little child shall lead them.
 Haste makes waste.
 With malice toward none; with charity for all.

Dramatic situations set up in the classroom do not appeal to
 65 per cent of those answering Question 19.

Set up dramatic situations in the classroom?
 Yes 27 No 49. What are some?

Two teachers set up dramatic situations based upon scripts of one-act plays written by their students. Mistakes in etiquette are dramatized in one teacher's class in order to get the students' written reaction. One teacher creates an atmosphere by staring to the back of the room and saying in a tense voice, "Don't turn. Just sit there quietly where you are. Don't move." She has her students write their reactions to the dramatic situation which this series of commands produces. Another teacher has her students enact calling up a friend for a date and being rebuffed.

The "Remarks" section of the survey form provides for a discussion of other methods not specifically mentioned in the section on methods and approaches. Few methods were treated by the teachers who wrote in the "Remarks" section, but generally the remarks were aimed at specific comments or explanations of individual practices and theories of the teaching of creative writing.

Nine of the teachers who wrote in "Remarks" claimed that there is "no magic formula" for the teaching of creative writing: what will work for one class will not work for another. "Stereotyped methods and theories" are worthless unless the individual teachers temper them with common sense in recognizing the abilities of the class members.

Eight other teachers said that they did not consider themselves "in any sense" teachers of creative writing. (Seven other teachers did not complete the form for the same reason.) They noted also that the students whose works were published in the *Illinois English Bulletin* were superior students. They did not believe that the quality of these superior students' works was affected by their efforts as teachers of creative writing.

Three other teachers discussed the requisites they feel necessary for teachers of creative writing and for a class of creative writing. Two of these teachers feel that the successful teacher of creative writing is the teacher who writes either professionally or in the same vein as her students. The other teacher asserts that the most successful creative writing class is the "screened elective, with acceptance into the class on the basis of intelligence, reading and vocabulary scores, and previous record in English."

Other methods were discussed by six teachers. Three teachers use examples of excellent student writing to stimulate their students. These teachers also give praise in the classroom to the best efforts of students as an incentive to the rest of the class. Two teachers attempt to alter "teen agers' attitudes toward poetry of flowers and nature" and to instill a pleasure in the reading and

studying of poetry. Another teacher has her students write on 3 x 5 cards paragraphs describing the thoughts that come to them and the deeper reflection that follows the first idle thoughts.

Section III: Training, Experience, and Teaching Load of the Teachers

Thirty-three of the 78 replies to Question 1 indicated that the teachers recalled no specific courses as being of most value in preparing them for teaching creative writing.

Which specific courses in college were of most value in preparing you for teaching creative writing?

Forty-five teachers listed four courses or fields which aided their preparation. Creative writing courses were named twenty-three times; literature courses, nine times; composition courses, nine times; and journalism courses, four times.

Seventy per cent of the teachers have had no formal training in creative writing.

Have you ever had formal training in creative writing?

Yes 23 No 55. Number of hours

The training in creative writing of the seventeen teachers who answered the second part of the question varies from three to thirty hours.

TABLE 3
HOURS OF FORMAL TRAINING IN CREATIVE WRITING

<i>Teachers</i>	<i>Hours</i>
6	3
3	4
4	6
2	9
2	30

The reporting teachers show in their answers to Question 3 that most are graduates of liberal arts institutions and holders of master of arts degrees.

Did you receive teachers college 19 or liberal arts 59 education? Degree which you hold?

Seventy-six per cent of the teachers received liberal arts education. Holders of a Master of Arts degree total 78 per cent. (See Table 4 on page 16.)

The replies to Question 4 indicate that 46 per cent of the teachers are authors of published works.

Have you had some of your original pieces published?
Yes 36 No 42.

The number of years of teaching experience varies from one year to forty-two years in the reports on Question 5.

How many years have you taught creative writing?

TABLE 4
COLLEGE DEGREES OF THE TEACHERS

<i>Degree</i>	<i>Teachers</i>
Bachelor of Philosophy.....	2
Bachelor of Arts.....	5
Bachelor of Science.....	6
Master of Arts.....	61
Master of Science.....	4

TABLE 5
TEACHING EXPERIENCE IN YEARS FOR THE TEACHERS

<i>Experience</i>	<i>Teachers</i>	<i>Experience</i>	<i>Teachers</i>
1	2	15	7
2	1	20	10
3	1	22	1
4	2	25	1
5	1	26	1
6	6	28	3
8	5	29	3
10	5	32	1
11	3	34	2
12	7	35	1
13	1	42	1

Table 5 shows sixty-five teachers giving their number of years of experience and a total of years of 1,012. This total of years and the number of teachers establishes a mean of 15.5 years of experience for the teachers.

Most of the teachers are teaching on the senior level.

What year(s) do you teach? Freshman 14 Sophomore 33
Junior 34 Senior 43.

Of the seventy-four teachers who answered Question 6, two-thirds teach on more than one level.

In answer to Question 7, seventy-four replies establish a mean class size of twenty-five students.

What is the average number of students you have in
your writing classes?

TABLE 6

THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF STUDENTS PER CLASS

<i>Students Per Class</i>	<i>Teachers Reporting</i>		<i>Students Per Class</i>	<i>Teachers Reporting</i>
12	1		28	5
20	6		29	1
25	30		30	20
26	3		32	4
27	1		40	3

The average daily class load is five classes for the teachers who answered Question 8.

How many classes do you teach daily?

Forty-nine teachers, or 63 per cent, have five classes daily. Twenty-two teachers instruct four classes; three, three; and four, six classes.

The final question of the survey shows that most of the teachers specialize in the field of English.

Do you teach in another subject area also?

Yes 28 No 50. What is the area?

Eight other areas were listed by the teachers. The areas and the number of teachers who teach in them are: (1) Latin, twelve; (2) journalism, seven; (3) speech, three; (4) history, three; (5) Spanish, one; (6) French, one; (7) religion, one; and (8) common learnings, one.

SUMMARY

The obviously small number of separate creative writing courses indicates that creative writing as a subject is not considered as equal to composition, literature, or journalism courses in a high school English curriculum. In whatever situation creative writing is taught, whether in a literature course or a separate course of creative writing, the teachers prefer a systematic form of instruction in the unit plan for presenting the fundamentals of creative expression. Possibly this preference for using the unit plan is a reflection of the current popularity of the unit plan. These units are almost always drawn from the experience of the teachers, because of the lack of a suitable textbook which offers organized materials and methods for the teaching of creative writing.

Effective creative writing is dependent in a large part on the mastery of vocabulary of the writers. A closely conjoined teaching of vocabulary and creative writing lays the foundation for greater effectiveness in the writings of the students.

The frequency of assignments, length of assignments, and topics for writings are problems in the teaching of writing which are resolved by the teachers in ways that receive general agreement. A limiting factor which has most weight in determining the frequency of assignments is the time that the teacher has for grading of the assignments. A constant assigning of length to pieces, whether by the number of pages or by the number of words, is not an aid to creative writing, although giving a definite length, either by stating a maximum or minimum, develops discipline in writing, clarity, and conciseness. Occasionally the creative faculties of students fail to produce even a topic for a written assignment. A list of topics to meet this emergency is an essential part of the teachers' materials for the creative writing course. The students are not restricted to using this list, however, for this would check the teachers' desire to give the students complete freedom in their choice of topics.

The basic approach to creative writing is relating familiar, personal events and interests to a study of literature and the authors found in literature. Literature serves as an area for the exploration of ideas, and authors and their styles and techniques guide the students in the discovering of methods of treating subjects. Although techniques of authors are studied, a conscious imitation of these techniques is seldom encouraged for the students. A relationship is established between the plots and subjects of literature and the events in the lives of the students. By recognizing the similarities between the simplicities of literary plots and the simplicities of their own lives, the students come to a realization that familiar, personal interests are good plot materials.

These environmental happenings which are used for topic materials are recorded in students' minds by sense impressions. The recording of these events of school life, seasons, and holidays, or of autobiographical references is in a language both simple and direct. The proper use of the simple and direct language stems from the study of literature and the nature of the subjects which the students treat.

Creative writing is an individual effort for the most part, not a group effort, although most teachers supply a common beginning for a group of student writers. This common beginning may be in the form of topic sentences or quotations or proverbs. These sentences or quotations are to be expanded and developed in a manner peculiar to each of the student writers.

Formal training in creative writing is not essential to a successful teacher of creative writing. Nor is success in professional writ-

ing an absolute indicator of success in the teaching of creative writing. Experience, however, appears to be a basis for success in creative writing. Fifteen years of actual teaching experience and study on the graduate level show academic and practical experience. Another part of experience is the ability to teach effectively with a heavy class load. These successful teachers carry an average of five daily classes with 125 students. The level of instruction, junior and senior years, places a further demand upon the teaching experience of the teachers in that these two levels of instruction demand more than drills in the basic fundamentals of the writing process.

This article casts together the methods and materials which have been successfully used in a variety of classrooms and with a variety of students, but these ideas can be utilized only in the instances where they fit into similar class situations and class groupings. Teachers of creative writing must be flexible in their approaches and methods for their teaching. The flexibility of these teachers is, in the final analysis, "common sense." The creative thoughts and imaginations of each of the individuals in a class cause a situation that does not permit the teachers to stamp a class by a stereotyped "Approach A" or "Method B."

